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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the evolution of missionaries' role in U.S. settlement and education, focusing on the impact on American Indian languages. Missionaries did not know the respective cultures of the American Indian tribes they worked with, and they viewed cultures different from their own as inferior. They could not conceive of any difference between the Gospel and their own culture and could not imagine Native Americans following Christ within their tribal culture. They feared that their Indian converts would practice syncretism. The plight of many American Indians who accepted Christ was that there was no "halfway point," so if they converted, they had to wear white man's clothing, observe the Sabbath, send their children to school, and build a house. The fear of some Christian parents in regard to teaching Navajo in the schools is that as their children learn the language along with religion, their naivete and innocence will lead to syncretism. The paper presents recommendations for teaching the Navajo language. Three appendixes offer Navajo Christian parents' responses to the question, "Is the Navajo language important?"; Navajo Christian parents' objections to the teaching of Navajo in the schools; and recommendations of Navajo Christian parents for teaching Navajo in schools. (Contains 25 references.) (SM)

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Missionaries and American Indian Languages

Evangeline Parsons Yazzie

ED 482 043

American Indians have suffered greatly in the name of religion and education, which were enforced for the purposes of "civilization." Colonists arrived in search of freedom of religion, a new life, and happiness. While, these newcomers were oppressed in their former land, they became the oppressors in the new one. Their oppression made its mark on the American Indians. However, in spite of all the years of cruel and harsh treatment in an attempt to strip generations of American Indians of their lands and identity, America has not seen the disappearance of American Indian cultures, lifestyles, languages, traditions, and religions.

Missionaries were acculturative agents who aimed not only at producing converts, but sought to completely transform Indians . Missionaries acted on the principle that Christianity must precede civilization if the latter was to be of any real value (Berkhofer, 1971). In spreading the Gospel, missionaries not only preached for the purpose of an individual becoming "born again," but for the purpose of the rebirth and remaking of the American Indian societies (Krass, 1979).

Missionaries did not only enter Indian societies when they received the "call of the Lord" but also when the government directed. As early as 1636, "Plymouth Colony enacted laws to provide for the preaching of the Gospel among the Indians" (Pearce, 1965, p. 27). The Trade and Intercourse Act of 1802 included a plan to provide social and educational services to civilize the Indians. In 1819, Congress established a civilization fund to provide financial support to religious groups and others willing to live and teach among the Indians (Reyhner & Eder, in press).

Missionaries became a fixture in Indian societies after the Civil War when President Grant instituted a Peace Policy to ensure the success of the reservation system. A Board of Indian Commissioners was appointed in 1869 to supervise the appointment of Indian agents to maintain peace by mediating disputes, to supply teachers, and to settle Indians in agricultural communities. The Indian Commissioners believed missionaries would effectively facilitate the peaceful assimilation of Indians into the dominant "civilized" community. By 1888, Congress was appropriating more than $1,000,000 a year to educate Indian children, where nearly half of the appropriations were contracted to missionaries. Direct government funding of mission schools was phased out in the 1890s, but missionaries were encouraged to work with government school students into the 1960s (Reyhner & Eder, in press).

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Christianization for civilization: The American Indians & the missionaries

There can be a considerable amount of anguish produced in individual households as its members become converted to the many different missionary churches. There could be persons of three or four religious persuasions within one household and severe arguments may occur (Jimson, 1977). Berkhofer (1971)

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describes how the social disruption created by missionaries resulting from conversion to Christianity took place. The acceptance of new values followed by persecution by the unconverted demanded new social relationships and a break between Native Christians and their Native society.

The message preached by missionaries that is found in Mark 10:21 reads, "One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me." Missionaries took it upon themselves to decide what the American Indians were to give up; they preached that the Indians had to give up their culture, their identity, and, in doing so, they were picking up their cross and following Christ. New converts found it necessary to "distinguish between those things which must immediately and totally be forbidden; those which are undesirable, and that which could gradually die out" (Neill, 1979, p. 12), but the outside domination of the missionaries' insensitivity to the needs of the American Indians forced them into isolation; isolation from their family members, and isolation from the "superior missionaries" who converted them (Mastra, 1979).

The missionaries did not know the respective cultures of the American Indians. The words, in a conversation my father had many years ago with a missionary, still ring in my ears where he said,

> Let us Navajo pastors who know our culture decide where to draw the line between culture and religion. You are drawing the line out of fear that you will lose your converts to their traditional ways because they practice their culture. There are many things that are good about being Navajo. The Navajo culture and being Navajo has sustained us for many years. It is who we are that has helped us survive all these years through many hardships. (Bruce Yazzie, personal communication, 1970)

Cultures that were different from those of the missionaries were viewed as inferior (Kraft, 1979). The result is a great wedge that has been driven between the convert and his culture. This is a reason why missionaries have not been more successful among the American Indians in the United States (Pearce, 1965). Missionaries could not conceive of any difference between the Gospel and their own culture and could not imagine Native Americans following Christ within their tribal culture.

Syncretism and contextualization

Missionaries who did not know the culture of their Indian converts were afraid they would practice syncretism, a concept defined by the Webster dictionary (1937, p. 1690) as the "union of principles irreconcilably at variance with each other, especially the doctrines of certain religions." The fear of syncretism caused missionaries to draw the line between the culture and religion of converts. Native Christian leaders (1999, p. 2) defined syncretism as "the subtle attempt to integrate Biblical truth and faith in Christ with non-biblical Native

religious beliefs, practices, and forms." The native leaders (1999, p. 1) developed a biblical position regarding syncretism, stating:

> We believe that Christ should have preeminence and permeates all aspects of our lives and, through us, all aspects of our cultures, to promote the glory of God. God will not share His glory with anything in creation. To do so is idolatry. To combine elements of Native religion and Biblical truth is syncretism. We must renounce and avoid any form of idolatry and syncretism, because they are forbidden in Scripture [the Holy Bible].

The leaders further believe syncretism is the birth of another gospel. Because so much of their culture is embedded in religion, many American Indian Christians avoid certain aspects of their culture that contain religious components to avoid syncretism.

A far less destructive approach to missionary work would have been contextualization, which is "based upon mutual respect in the relationship between races, religion and cultures (Mastra, 1979, p. 355). Osei-Mensah (1979, p. 384) illustrates contextualization: "The gospel does not throw out culture," instead it "comes into our culture, it settles there, it brings its impact on our total life within culture." He concludes with, "God does not want us to be aliens to our culture—only aliens to sin." In contrast, most missionaries preached a complete separation from Native American culture, where their converts became alien to their own people, culture, and lifestyle. It is no wonder why the missionaries have seemed to fail when working among the American Indians (Winter, p. 2000). In civilizing the Indians, Protestant missionaries imposed the wrath of God upon them, while saving the love of God for themselves. Oppression, in the form of religion and education, has made its mark on the American Indians. At stake is a person's birthright—their language and culture.

In 1999, an association of Christian Native leaders described Native culture as "the dynamic learned lifeways, beliefs and values of our people as revealed in our languages, customs, relationships, arts and rituals." They further explain that, "In native culture, religion permeates all aspects of life and is often identified as being the culture, even though it is only an aspect of it (Native Leaders on Native Spirituality, p. 2).

The plight of many American Indians who accepted Christ and made the decision to follow His teachings was that there "was no halfway point"; instead, separation was required. When an Indian fully surrendered to Christ, he observed the Sabbath, attended church, dressed in white man's clothing, sent his children to school, and built a house (Berkhofer, 1971, p. 124). The missionary reduced the Gospel to a verbal proclamation only, where the culture of the convert was disregarded. When the Gospel becomes only a verbal proclamation, "it gives a feeling of superiority of the Christian religion and culture over the non-Christian religion and culture" (Mastra, 1979, p. 366). Kraft (1979) believes missionaries did not see biblical meaning as absolute but were always affected

by their own "culturally inculcated understandings of life in general (287), and yet the same missionaries failed to appreciate the cultural differences of the people to whom they were sent. According to Mastra (1979), too often the Christian message has hurt the community because many community members feel they have been insulted by the message and actions of Christians and missionaries. The result of this insult is not people respecting and loving Christ, but resenting both Christians and missionaries. Missionaries can place the American Indian convert in a precarious situation within his own community with the new convert viewed as an accomplice of the missionaries, traitors to their own people, betrayers of their identity, and ones who have denied their own culture and ancestral religion (Mastra, 1979).

Importance of maintaining Indian languages

Our native language presents us with an identity, and describes a culture with which to identify. Marshall (1979, p. 22 & 26) defined culture as "the human response to the environment" embedded in a set of values, and he states, "language is a part of culture, which helps to shape it." Explaining how words shape a culture, Witherspoon (1977, pp. 6-7) writes, "culture is an ideological system by which the world is defined, described, and understood," and the "best entry into another culture is through the language." Fishman (1994) gives life to the relationship between language and culture in his statement: "A language that has grown up with a culture best describes that culture." In my doctoral research (Parsons Yazzie, 1995), I found Navajo elders were adamant in declaring their culture cannot be practiced with the use of a stranger's words, therefore when a language is in jeopardy, the culture is also at risk. The statements I have collected from some Protestant Christian parents about their thoughts about the importance of their language are given in Appendix A. I found from my interviews that these parents felt both a responsibility and a desire to determine how their children would be educated. By expressing their concerns about how Navajo is taught in the schools, these parents are claiming the right to determine how their children are taught.

Concerns of Christian parents in regard to teaching Navajo in the schools

The fear of some Christian parents is that as their children learn the language along with the religion, the innocence and naivete of their child will lead to syncretism. Davis (1994, p. 15), an advocate of a "True Education" based on Navajo knowledge, wrote:

> The teaching [of the Navajo language] is not a religion; it is not a belief of a man-made philosophy. It is real. It is a spiritual reality; it is not a man-made system. It is real because we are made of the sacred elements of Divine Creation. We are made of the water, we are made of the fire, we are made of the air. Herein is a true spiritual empowerment principle that restores Navajo-specific teaching and also simultaneously restores spiritual harmony individually and collectively.

Benally (1988, p. 12), a Navajo language and philosophy instructor at Diné College, identifies the "Navajo philosophy of learning as an organized way of learning that allows the individual to obtain a state of serenity called *hozho*." Davis' and Benally's statements cause Navajo Christians to approach classrooms based on this philosophy with caution because they tread on religious ground. Hozho smacks of religion and immediately causes a Navajo Christian to avoid it because it interfaces with Navajo religion. Benally describes "*Hozho*" as "a state of much good, peace, happiness, and plenty" (1988, p. 12). He further believes the language, culture, and spirituality are intertwined where it is difficult to know where one ends and the other begins. This concept is evident in his statements concerning Navajo philosophy, teaching, and learning. He finds that knowledge is spiritual and the goal of Navajo knowledge is peace, harmony, and the attainment of greater spirituality and happiness (1988).

Davis (1994, p. 15) claims a Navajo child is empowered by the Navajo language to a "spiritual self-identity" through Navajo origin stories, one's family clan system, and self awareness. Christian parents can object to this declaration that Navajo language teaching in classrooms falls into this spiritual realm. Davis and Benally have good intentions in their teaching, however Christian parents have a right to have their children learn their language in school without jeopardizing their faith. The objections of Protestant Christian parents to teaching Navajo language in schools that I have collected are given in Appendix B.

Mindell and Gurwitt (1977) discuss how Indian parents were stripped of their parenting responsibilities in the name of education, and Kahn (1970, p. 33) observes that, in the past, Navajo people called a federally funded boarding school "Washington's school"; with a public school referred to as the "little white children's school." A mission school was called "the missionary's school." Parents did not claim these schools. Today, the distinctions are made for the purposes of identification of funding sources only, and for a few parents, schools are referred to as "our children's school." Christian parents also claim the school as their children's school, which is the reason for their objections to language teaching.

Shonero (1989, p. 19) identifies "the natural tendency of all societies to view their way of doing things as best" as a major problem in education, where a religious or philosophical difference is viewed as a deficit. In this case, the Navajo Language Teachers Association, the Navajo Language and Culture Curriculum Committee, and the Department of Navajo Education believe that as Navajo children learn their language, they should also learn about Navajo culture, philosophy, and traditional religious beliefs. Everyone feels the need to be accepted. Children are no exception. They want to feel accepted in the schools and with this acceptance comes a respect for the child's background and religious preference. Respect is absolutely essential for further learning, according to Shonero (1989).

In 1988, Benally was critical of curriculum development when he wrote, "Curriculum development in our present educational system has been one-sided, and all attempts to integrate traditional knowledge have been heavily influenced

by dominant Western thinking" (1988, p. 12). It is obvious that conditions have changed. Presently, it is the Navajo Christians who are voicing the concern that curriculum development is "one-sided," where requests to separate the teaching of language and culture from traditional religious beliefs have been disregarded by traditional Navajo teachers, administrators, and curriculum developers.

Over a decade ago, Benally (1988, p. 12) posed an important question at a time when "dominant Western thinking" influenced the integration of traditional (Navajo) knowledge. He asked, "Which aspects of mainstream and traditional culture should be integrated?" Today, Navajo Christians request that there be a separation between language and religion and culture and religion. These parents are concerned that their children will not have the freedom to study their Native language in school without having to compromise their own religious preferences. In essence, these parents are concerned that their children, not knowing enough of where to draw the line between religion and culture, will incorporate Navajo traditional beliefs into their own faith—leading toward syncretism. A child should not be expected to learn aspects of another's religion in order to study their language of inheritance. The responses I have collected of Navajo Protestant Christian parents' thoughts about how Navajo language should be taught are given in Appendix C. These responses include their recommendations for teaching the language, the content that should be taught, as well as the grade levels that Navajo should be taught in. There was an overall consensus on Navajo literacy, where all the respondents believe their children's Navajo language learning experience would be enriched by literacy. One parent epitomized the responses of all the parents saying, "The parents are responsible for the kind of language that our children speak, be it kind or harsh. The parents are also responsible for teaching their children their Native language. Parents have been neglectful" (S. Franklin, 2002). The following recommendation was also mentioned by others: "The Navajo language should be taught by certified teachers. Just because there is a shortage of Navajo language teachers does not mean you lower your standards and hire non-certified people" (B. Yazzie, 2002).

Recommendations for teaching the Navajo language

McLaughlin (1988, p. 22) in addressing Navajo literacy wrote, "The minority student's language must be incorporated into the process and content of schooling; community members must be involved collaboratively in making curricular and administrative decisions as well." This recommendation echos the statements of the Protestant Christian parents given in Appendix C. In describing a Navajo language teaching program at a school on the Navajo Reservation, Arviso and Holm (1990) characterize the program as one that successfully offers the Navajo language throughout the curriculum and grade levels. No mention of religion was made. However, they have found many of the parents and grandparents are ambivalent concerning the value of the Navajo language. Although they regret the loss of the language, the elders do not view the language as necessary or desirable for their children. Elders credited their formal education and English language abilities for enabling them to obtain work, and there is a

tendency to value Anglo education and the English language over traditional Navajo learning and the Navajo language.

In a later study, Holm (1993) found parents transmitting to their children the view that "Navajo-ness" as a deficiency toward, and a deterrent of, success socially, economically, and educationally. He recommended that as these children become adolescents, then adults, strong social and cultural identities need to be developed within them to counter these attitudes. Arviso and Holm (1990) recommended that as students learn a language, real communication should be the purpose. Real communication contains meaningful information that is transmitted between a speaker and listener. They recommended talking about personal experiences as an excellent way to develop one's language abilities.

Fishman (1991, p. 236) offers an important recommendation for Native language preservation and maintenance, placing the responsibility of language transmittal back in the home environment. He states, "The parents need not shoulder the entire responsibility of transmitting the Navajo language. Grandparents are an avenue to language acquisition because they constitute the major corps of active and fluent speakers and provide intergenerational interaction." The parents I spoke to also recommend this process of language development. They want their child to be able to converse with their elders, which is "real communication."

Conclusion

Religion and education continue to take their toll on American Indians. Parents and elders were deprived of parenting while their children attended boarding schools and were deprived of their inheritance—their right to be an American Indian with a language, a song, a prayer, a culture, a home, and most importantly love. Just as freedom of religion was not a right generations of American Indian children enjoyed, reservation schools should not further oppress and ignore the religious preference Christian parents have for their children. Students need to be able to trust their teachers and feel safe in the schools, but if children are made to feel they are being disloyal to their parents and their religious beliefs, this trust is threatened.

Linguist Clay Slate (1993) claims a child's Native language is their birthright. The Navajo language and culture are beautiful. The same goes for all Indian languages and cultures. I believe Christian parents should not allow indifference or resentment of other religious beliefs to continue to deprive us of our identity. It is imperative for Christian parents to: 1) solidify their child's religious foundation, 2) teach their children what is "religiously safe" and "good" about their native language and culture, and 3) get involved with their children's education and help decide what is "culturally safe" to teach. Most teachers and administrators have the best interests of their students at heart and want to educate in an atmosphere of equality; therefore they are open to parental input.

I am thankful to the handful of Christians who helped to clarify the reasons they are apprehensive about the teaching of Navajo in the schools. I am confident their concerns and recommendations can be generalized to other areas of

the Reservation, other school districts, and other Reservations. It is my hope that this information is useful to parents, teachers, administrators, and school board officials. It was important to me that the public realize that native Christians can want their children to learn their native tongue without having to compromise their faith and trust in God.

Note: It was my intention to report and educate my readers on the evolution of the role of missionaries in the settlement and education of this country. It was important to me that the public realize that native Christians have also been oppressed by the missionaries. I was raised on a Baptist mission and educated by missionaries, and I experienced and saw equality and inequality firsthand. It was obvious by their daily lives which missionaries chose to exhibit the wrath of God and which chose to demonstrate the love of God. Owing to the dedication of my parents (my father having been a pastor in the Baptist Church) to teach the Love of God, I have the satisfaction of teaching my language, the Navajo language, at a major university. I do not compromise my belief in God because I was taught by my father how to contextualize my belief in God with my Navajo culture.

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Appendix A

Responses to the question "Is the Navajo language important?" by Navajo Christian parents

"Navajo is so beautiful, it is hard to get that same feeling in English. You get stronger if you talk in Navajo. If you speak Navajo and English, you are a very powerful person. When you speak your language, it strengthens your identity" (B. Robinson, 2000).

"The language is the people. If you understand the language, then you understand the people" (B. Robinson, 2000).

"We Christians can't keep something good [referring to the teaching of Navajo in the schools] from our children" (A. Franklin, 2002).

"Things have been ruined. There is so much poverty and so many parents are in debt. So many parents just want Navajo taught in the schools because they want to give their children something they believe is good. The parents are looking for hope. Our language gives us hope" (S. Franklin, 2002).

"We cannot condemn them [non-Christian parents] for offering what they feel is best for their children. They have compassion for their children too" (R. Begay, 2002).

"The overall intent of teaching Navajo is to give our children a sense of well-being. Our language gives our children confidence, confidence to function well in both worlds" (B. Yazzie, 2002).

"Our children need to learn Navajo because the elders are disappointed and offended when their grandchildren cannot speak to them in Navajo. Respect has been forgotten. If you respect someone, you will communicate with them. We have forgotten that we will get old. We have to teach our children the way the elders taught us so we will not be forgotten by our grandchildren" (B. Daw, 2002).

"When we do things as Navajos and in Navajo, we do things as a unit, such as the clan system, the planting of the cornfields, the building of a ramada or a home. There is no such thing as not succeeding in Navajo, but with the white man's way, everyone is an individual. It makes it easy to fail" (W. Begay, 2002).

"If we lose our language, what will we be remembered by? To not forget one's language is to have respect" (M. Begay, 2002).

"Our children need to be able to communicate with their grandparents because the elders are the ones who still remember what it means to be a real Navajo. The elder is the one who practices the culture and not just one who only speaks the language" (A. Yazzie, 2000).

Appendix B

Navajo Christian parents' objections to the teaching of Navajo in the schools

"The same things that are taught in English are what should be taught in Navajo. They do not teach religion in English so why should they teach it in Navajo? There needs to be a separation of church and state. I learned Navajo without the Navajo religion so that's how I want my kids taught. To learn Navajo, you don't have to learn about religion. A parent should be able to choose for their child" (V. Gordy, 2000).

"I would take my daughter out of the Navajo class when religion is taught. It is like teaching Mormonism in the schools. I want it [Navajo religion] in its place. If Navajo religion is sacred as they say, and if it is taught in the schools, then it won't be sacred anymore. If you are respecting your religion, it should not be taught in an everyday classroom. I was not brought up in the Navajo religion but I still learned the language, so they can do that in the schools too" (B. Robinson, 2000).

"Where will it stop? If we, Navajo parents, do not draw the line [between culture and religion], something else will be added that we Christian parents do not want our children exposed to. There is no place for religion in school; well, maybe as an elective, but [it] should not be taught with the Navajo language. Christians do not have anything against the Navajo language. The problem is the religion aspect that is being included" (A. Yazzie, 2000).

"We need to let the Word of God help us make up our minds. The Lord says you are separated unto me. I will bless you if you keep my commandments. I have sympathy for them [the children]. I have compassion for them. Our children are not trained to recognize the Navajo religion. Navajo philosophy and Navajo religion will bring confusion into my child's life. Learning about the Navajo religion will place doubt in my child's mind about God. I want my children to learn about God. I want them to build their Christian faith. I do not want my child to be misled on what to believe" (S. Franklin, 2002).

"The Christian parents know how much the language is tied to the culture and the religion, but their children are unaware of the fine line that exists between the culture and the religion. Further, when cultural concepts are taught, these parents believe there is a conversion attempt toward a traditional belief." (B. Yazzie, 2002).

"There is nothing we have against the tradition. It is because of what happened when we became Christians. I left all the traditional ceremonies, songs pertaining to the ceremonies, and prayers behind. I have a new way of worship now. We have to watch out for our children. The Lord says we should not have idols. But Navajos teach about the sacred mountains. We should not worship those" (C. Daw, 2002).

"Christian parents withhold [traditional] stories from their children because they see them as beliefs and not as teachings" (W. Begay, 2002).

"The culture can be taught, yes, but the traditional beliefs cannot be taught in school because our children do not know enough about it. How will our children know what is culture and what is religion? They will not be able to withstand the traditional ways" (M. Begay, 2002).

"Navajo Christians should be the ones to determine where culture and religion are separated. But, how many of us are willing to go to a meeting and stand up and declare where the separation should be drawn? Even with the traditional religion, things keep getting added. For those of us who left that [traditional religion] to become Christians would not know about these new things that have been added. One example is the Native American Church. That is not something that is traditional, and yet, many people who claim to be traditionalists attend the Native American Church meetings. That just makes the line that separates culture and religion even fuzzier" (W. Begay, 2002).

"We cannot assume that everyone has the same religious beliefs. The Navajo language teachers should also should not assume that everyone has the same beliefs." (J. Yazzie, 2002)

"Many traditional Navajos do not want us to preach to them or to their families about the Lord. Why should they insist on teaching our children about their religion when they teach the Navajo language in the schools?" (M. Begay. 2002)

"I did not teach my child well enough about the Lord. I am afraid that he will easily be swayed and will begin to mix both religions—the traditional and Christianity. It is my own fault that I did not teach my child Navajo and it is my fault that I did not teach him more about God." (M. Yazzie, 2002)

Appendix C

Recommendations of Navajo Christian parents for teaching Navajo in schools

"They [Navajo language classes] should be run just like English language classes. Religion is not addressed unless it is part of the literature introduced. If they teach Navajo from Kindergarten through the 12th grade, our children will not have an English accent when they speak Navajo" (L. Manuelito, 2000).

"If they are going to also teach religion then it will have to be an extracurricular activity because of the religion aspect. In high school it could be taught as an elective, so my child and I could choose, rather than asking her to sit in the library during the Navajo class and be treated as if she was being punished. You can teach the language without putting religion into it. The songs can be taught as long as they are pertaining to everyday things, things all of us deal with. The language should be taught from Kindergarten through high school, if it is planned with equality in mind" (B. Robinson, 2000).

"It will take someone who knows both sides [traditional and Christian] to teach it. How are the traditional people going to know what Christians do not want taught? I have respect for Navajo teachings and stories. Just as the teachings from the Bible have been passed down through many generations, so have the Navajo stories and teachings. It will take someone who has respect and compassion for all people and beliefs who will be able to teach my language. We cannot condemn the people who believe differently, it only hurts the people and it hurts the children. It should be taught to all children of all ages because we are losing our language fast. The Navajo clan system should be taught so our children will be rich in relatives. Christian parents should get involved with planning [curriculum] but not take over, leave it to the professionals" (S. Franklin, 2002).

"The way it is presented is the key. If the intent is to teach the culture so the students can become 'full Navajos' so that they can participate in ceremonies, then the intent is wrong because you can't channel children in religion. That is the parents' responsibility. Parental involvement is important because they can determine what contents are taught. Each community needs to determine for themselves how each school will behave, because some communities have varying degrees of traditionalism. Some communities are traditional, some are Christian, some are predominantly Native American Church. There are all these entities in each community. The parents know their community. They can read the community and decide how much traditionalism should be taught in their school. Christian parents need to allow their children to learn about Navajo cultural concepts not necessarily learn them" [No preference given for the grades Navajo language classes should take place in] (B. Yazzie, 2002).

"Our children need to learn Navajo values, such as kindness and the environment. Education is number one. If we can use education to get back into the Navajo ways and lifestyle then our children will remember their elders. They

can ask questions of them and learn from their families and the school. What they don't learn at school they can learn at home" (B. Daw, 2002).

"The stories from the past are not being told. Navajo teachings are going to have to be taught. The culture should be taught, but not the religion, no. What was true Navajo is not known anymore. Things just keep getting added. Small communities have unity, even between the traditionalists and the Christians. Navajo Christians who speak the language well should be the ones to help decide where the separation between language and culture is made. The basics should be taught such as the Coyote Stories because there are a lot of moral teachings involved with it. The stories make the children think. All grades should have Navajo language" (W. Begay, 2002).

"We cannot assume that everyone has the same beliefs. The Navajo language teachers should also not assume that everyone has the same beliefs. Navajo language should be taught to all grades because our children have so much to catch up on" (M. Begay, 2002).

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